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No. 203

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

March 8th, 1944

DEAR MEMBER,

Without any hullabaloo and with a modicum of debate the House of Commons has given its approval in Committee to the first clause in the Education Bill, which authorizes the appointment of a Minister " whose duty it shall be to promote the education of the people of England and Wales," and gives him " control and direction " of the execution of the national policy by local authorities. We have grown so used to voting away our liberties for the duration that it may at first escape our notice that we are here legislating not for war time, but for peace. The nation has decided to take the plunge and make the state, through Parliament, responsible for the care, guidance and training of its future citizens.

THE CONTROL OF EDUCATION

Every generous instinct that makes us desire for our boys and girls a real chance in life prompts us to applaud the act. The Christian News-Letter is wholly for it. During more than sixty years of slow educational development there has been some remarkable progress both in legislative planning and in material achievement. No country, for example, can boast better schools than some of our Senior Schools, built under the Hadow reorganization. But against this we have to set some disastrous failures. After seventy years of compulsory education, it still stops short at fourteen. The country is still littered with school buildings which are a disgrace. There is still no provision for the medical care and educational development of those who are in their first years of work.

Local education authorities in this country are not legally compelled to do anything more than provide for the instruction in the three R's of every child in their area under fourteen years of age. In point of fact all do more—some do much more—in accordance with their ability and willingness. The job of the Board of Education is to suggest, permit, persuade and subsidize. The result is a tremendous gap between the best and the worst in the work of education authorities and of voluntary bodies. On this basis we might wait another two generations before the things we most desire to see in education become facts. The hope that they may become realities not here and there, but all over the country, and in time to save the generation whose schooling has been so disastrously broken into by the war,[1] rests in the new note of *authority* which pervades the Bill. It is epitomized in this clause which has just received the ratification of Parliament.

[1] The effects of the war on education are excellently described in Mr. H. C. Dent's book *Education in Transition*, Kegan Paul, 12s. 6d. The threatened disaster and the recovery are vividly described, and the book is a mine of reliable information.

It is just when hopes are high that we need to remind ourselves that things very often turn out very differently from our intentions. In order to get what the country needs we have allowed a new concentration of power. Wrongly used it might fasten down upon us the most deadly form of totalitarian tyranny, the indoctrination of the nation's youth. That is an obvious risk which we take with our eyes open. A risk less obvious, but equally grave, is that the piling of responsibility for the welfare of the individual citizen on to the broad shoulders of the State tends to make us think that the smaller units to which the individual belongs are no more a vital necessity and may be allowed to die away. The Archbishop's Supplement pointed out that Christianity has always favoured the lesser units like the family, village, guild, trade union and church congregation, because it is only in these smaller groupings that the individual can practise love and duty to neighbour. The life of the individual draws strength and vitality from social intercourse in groups of family, neighbourhood and cultural activity. When the State, instead of fostering them, gathers everything into its own hands, human life becomes impoverished and society begins to decay.

This doctrine that society is something much greater and richer than the State has been expounded week by week in recent months with great impressiveness and persuasiveness in the columns of *The Tablet*. Attachment to these very sound and Christian doctrines has in its case resulted in a considerable coldness towards both the Beveridge Report and the Education Bill, which it regards as dangerous strides towards totalitarianism. It is implied that the majority of Christians who have hailed them with satisfaction pay only lip-service to the Christian conception of a true order of society, and when a real choice has to be made are ready to join with the crowd in a headlong rush over the precipice to disaster.

The question, of course, as always in politics, is not what is ideally the best, but which among a limited number of choices is to be preferred. For better or worse, we have been born into an industrial society. Only the State is strong enough to save us from being crushed by it. The State has consequently to be given powers sufficient to overcome the giants that bar the road to human well-being. If boys and girls are to have a real chance they must be protected by law from being caught up in the industrial machine at an immature age; they must be prepared in school to meet and conquer the depersonalizing force of the machine; the Minister must be given powers to initiate these laws and to see that they are observed. Power is an inevitable constituent of human life, and the characteristic of our age is the enormous increase in the accumulations of power. Power can only be controlled by power. It is fatal to be afraid of power; to run away from it is to be crushed by it in the end. The crucial matter is not how much power the State should possess, but the purposes for which its power is employed.

The true function of the State is to remove the hindrances to the good life. It can do little directly to promote the good life, since the essence of goodness is its spontaneity. The heart of the matter has been expressed by the Master of Balliol in the following passage:—

"*The end of power is to make men free.* Men cannot be made free without power. The use by men of power to make others free is a

difficult and delicate business, very easily perverted. . . . But if we are to keep our modern, complex, industrialized societies democratic in spirit, it is a task which cannot be shirked." [1]

It is when we pass from the functions of the State in creating the *conditions* that minister to healthy growth and of doing justice between interests already in the field, to positive attempts to organize directly the processes of education and to impose from above a particular conception of life, that grave dangers begin to appear. Public understanding of this vital distinction between the negative and the positive functions of the State is an indispensable condition of the present Bill achieving successfully the high ends to which it is directed.

THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE

A European refugee from Nazism, whose main interests lie in the field of sociology, remarked after more than five years' study of British society that the most remarkable difference between the social life of this country and of the continent is the number, variety and vigour of our voluntary organizations. It has been the British tradition for small groups of people to join forces to meet, very often in a simple fashion and in a limited area, a social need. The State has followed in the wake of this voluntary pioneering, subsidizing, supplementing, or even taking over the work of voluntary bodies. It alone has had the resources of organization and finance to do for the whole nation what voluntary organizations have been able to do for the few.

The growth of public education in this country is one notable instance of this process. We have now reached a new stage. Although the voluntary group still has its place, the State itself is increasingly taking the initiative in discovering and meeting social needs. The process by which the present Education Bill came into being is of great interest—first consultation with every interested party, and a spate of reports on education from political parties, voluntary organizations, groups of educationalists. Everybody who had anything to say was encouraged to say it. Then the White Paper was flown as a kite to test the wind of public opinion. Finally, the Bill itself.

How can this democratic principle be continued in the working out of the Bill when such powers have been put into the hands of the Minister of Education and of the two hundred or more Directors of Education up and down the country? Speaking of this new concentration of power to a Christian audience a month ago, Professor W. Moses Williams said: "The only thing that will prevent it from being badly used is the co-operation *within the system* of people like you and me. Into the new advisory councils there must flow intelligent and informed advice, otherwise we are putting our freedom in pawn. We must co-operate in whatever way we can with those who administer the measure—in the thinking and learning which must lie behind full administration." The strategic points at which voluntarily given service can be effective lie now in the new advisory councils, in the local education committees, and in the boards of managers of schools. If we abandon these to the tender mercies of handfuls of yes-men of any party the game is up.

[1] *Religion, Science and Society.* Oxford University Press, 3s. 6d.

INDUSTRIAL CHAPLAINCIES

The work of chaplains in factories, which is the subject of this week's Supplement,[1] was considered recently at a small conference under the auspices of the British Council of Churches.

Very strong doubts were expressed at the conference whether full-time chaplaincies made necessary in war factories by Sunday work and transferred labour should be continued after the war. Such a policy might have most unlooked-for results. A "factory church," composed of people of one vocation and without their families, would be an oddity in itself, and a widespread development of "factory religion" might even be the death of the local church.

The alternative favoured by the conference was increased contact between local clergy and ministers and the factories in their localities. Even so simple a suggestion raises a dozen further questions. Are all equally suited for the work? Is every parson in the neighbourhood to be allowed equal access without adjustment between the denominations? A parson will find that his parishioners work in many different factories miles outside his parish, and similarly that those whom he comes to know in the factory near his own doorstep live miles from his church. If his work in the factory succeeds and demands more of his time, is his own congregation going to feel neglected? How can he make an effective link between those whom he serves in the factory and the local church?

As yet we are still in the experimental stage. There is need of training for those who are going to undertake this work: it is as necessary for them to know the set-up of industry as for the foreign missionary to learn the language. The experience of those parsons who have gone to work in industry (vide the Supplement by Ian Fraser, "Masks and Men," C.N-L. No. 187) should be made available to the whole Church. But experiments of this kind should not lead us into the fallacious notion that the Church enters the factory only when the ordained minister sets foot over the threshold. It is there already in the presence of its lay members, and the prior responsibility for Christian decision, action and witness within the factory rests inescapably with them.

Yours sincerely,

M. Dean

[1] The writer of the Supplement, the Rev. Michael Dean, is one of the Industrial Secretaries of the Student Christian Movement, now working in a parish in Sheffield.

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THE CHRISTIAN NEWS-LETTER

Supplement to No. 203

MARCH 8TH, 1944

THE PARSON AND THE FACTORY

By MICHAEL DEAN

This Supplement is intended to give information about the work of chaplains in factories, and to put forward certain questions for discussion. The work of a factory chaplain is an experiment, and there is not yet sufficient data to provide answers to these questions. The Supplement is not concerned with chaplaincies in the Government war-time factories employing large numbers of transferred workers living in hostels; their problems are different.

THE WORK OF A FACTORY CHAPLAIN

"Factory chaplain" and "works padre" are elastic terms which can mean anything from the Vicar who goes into a local works to conduct a service on a National Day of Prayer or on Good Friday, to the man who is recognized by the management and the Works Council as the chaplain of their works. In most works the arrangement is quite informal; the vicar may have called on the works manager in his office, and said, "I rarely see the men in my parish; they're in your works all day long, Sundays as well. Will you let me walk round the works from time to time and talk with them?" In larger works the would-be chaplain has been invited to meet the Works Council or the Joint Production Committee, on which sit representatives of the management and of the men, to explain to them why he wishes to come into the works, and in what ways he thinks he may be able to help them. Sometimes the suggestion has been firmly turned down, but if the committee like the look of the man, he will be given a trial.

The opportunities of conversation with the men and of gaining their confidence vary with the type of works and the processes employed. When first suspicions have been overcome, some chaplains lunch in the various canteens in turn. A large works or shipyard may have six or seven canteens, corresponding to the various grades of staff and employees, ranging from the labourers' bare shed to the directors' well-furnished dining-room. In some works, such as a steelworks, most men have times when they can stand by for a few minutes, and in works where the processes allow it a good deal of the padre's work can be done in works hours. The padre has to gain some knowledge of the work men are doing, and use his common sense to know when a man is free, and when it is tactless or even dangerous to distract his attention from his work. In other factories or departments the work and the application required are far more continuous, and there is little opportunity for conversation during working hours. In addition, most of the employees may be on piece-work, and any interruption means something off the pay-packet.

In some works services are held in the canteen or in the factory yard in the lunch-hour. In works where, in war time, several hundred people are working a Sunday shift, Sunday services may be held. Services are not, however, the most important part of the chaplain's work. There is a great need for instruction in the most elementary principles of Christianity, and this can be carried out by "brains trusts" and discussions in the lunch-hour, and in innumerable conversations, once the padre has been accepted by the men. In some works the chaplain is given the use of a room at certain times where he can be consulted about personal difficulties and problems. This has its dangers, however; during working hours a chat with the chaplain, like a visit to the ambulance room, gives a grand excuse to the slacker. Then in the large works with a welfare department such dealing with personal and domestic problems tends to encroach on the work of that department. There is a need here for clear thinking and friendly co-operation in regard to the respective functions of the welfare officer and the chaplain.

What success have the factory chaplains had? Does their work result in people going to church? Most factory chaplains would say that we haven't got anywhere near that stage in the experiment yet, and the question itself shows an ignorance of the gap that exists between the Church and the worker. The results of the chaplain's work are not spectacular, but they may be nevertheless important. A slow breaking down of the barrier between the Church and the working man as friendships are established, the gradual dawning of the idea that the Christian faith may have more to do with his life than he thought, a very slow and gradual removal of misconceptions and some direct teaching as to what that faith is—these are the most that we can point to. The only spectacular features in the chaplain's work are certain services. The attendance of the whole of the management and the employees of a works at a service on a Day of Prayer is a new and moving phenomenon. Is it merely a temporary turning to God in a time of trouble? Or the expression of a community urge or herd instinct, without any religious meaning? These elements enter, but some of us who have conducted such services are convinced that they do not afford an adequate explanation. Whatever the reasons may be, barriers are disappearing, and a great opportunity is opening.

DIFFICULTIES AND SUSPICIONS

The great danger is that the chaplain may be regarded as the tool of the management, "a boss's man." Few ministers realize how strong in many factories is the suspicion of everything the management does. It must be remembered that the worker's idea of the Church will depend very largely on the parson he sees about the works, and it would be a disaster if working men saw the chaplain as a tool used to increase production or to support a grasping or incompetent management, or as a prop for a system of capitalism and private profit. Some of the clergy who are acting as factory chaplains seem quite unaware of this danger.

Yet it is a pitfall which it will be very difficult to avoid in some works. The parson is only in the factory by permission or invitation of the management, and if he departs too far from such lines as seem suitable to the management, that permission will be withdrawn. At present relations between management and men are on the whole comparatively good. After the war, with the inevitable frictions and dislocations during the transition from war to peace-time production, reduced earnings and transference to other jobs, there is a probability of considerable tension arising between the management and men in many works and in large sections of industry. On which side will the chaplain be ? It is not enough to say that he must be neutral. In many problems which arise in a works, such as wage questions, recognition of trade unions, and the functions of Joint Production Committees, moral judgements are inextricably bound up with practical decisions. Other problems are clear moral problems. The chaplain dare not be neutral where moral issues are involved.

In the works Christianity has a bad reputation to live down. In too many works a selfish employer, or a manager with no regard for his men, is known to be a Christian. Too often the religion of such working men as claim to be Christians is of a narrow and exclusive type which does not commend itself to their mates. The suspicion of the churches remains extremely strong. In many trade union circles the charge is still made that the churches are merely the tools of the capitalist to help in keeping the workers satisfied. The factory chaplain is then seen as the latest effort of the churches in diverting the workers from their real interests.

The existence of this attitude emphasizes the risks of going into the works " on the management's ticket " alone. However friendly the attitude of the management may be, it is desirable to spend considerable time exploring such contact as one has with the workers in a factory, and finally to approach the Works Council, where there is one, as well as the management, to find out whether the visits of a minister are likely to be welcome. On the other hand, in a small factory, and particularly where relations between management and men are good, the management's permission to visit may be sufficient.

Although we can get into the works without the support of the union officials or shop stewards, to ignore their influence and status would be a short-sighted policy. There is a wider question involved than the union official's support or disapproval of a works chaplain ; in British industry the trade unions, with all their deficiencies, safeguard the liberties of working men. They are more important than ever in view of the development of ever larger industrial units and combinations. The Christian should want to see the unions strong and their powers rightly used, and he should, therefore, do nothing to weaken them or to break such slender links as the Church has with them.

SOME POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. The works chaplaincy is an experiment which is well worth trying, but there should be no precipitate action and no unnecessary

publicity. The suggestion that a chaplain would be helped in his contacts with the workers by being officially commissioned by his church shows a lack of awareness of the working man's attitude to the churches. The authority of the Church counts for nothing in the works; a man must stand on his own merits.

2. The work of a minister in the factory is a new and specialized form of ministry. The nearest local minister or the vicar of the parish in which a works is situated may not be suitable for this work. In addition, if the factory is large, the chaplain must be able to spend much more time in the factory than most ministers of local churches can possibly afford. Some training is needed for men who are to do this specialized work, such as the "Training Conference for Works Padres" recently held in Sheffield.

3. It must be emphasized that we have not only a Gospel to preach; those of us who are attempting this work have also a great ignorance to overcome when we enter the factory, before we can preach that Gospel effectively in the unfamiliar circumstances in which we find ourselves. Our own greatest need is a willingness to learn—to discover patiently the needs and interests and outlook of the worker, his political interests, the organization of the factory, the problems which are facing industry to-day, in order that we may help both management and workers towards a living faith, and to face their responsibilities as Christians should.

Finally, this new opportunity in the works is opening at a time when great changes are taking place in industry itself. Planning, consultation with the workers and their representatives, new processes and techniques, changes in control, re-location of industry, all these, greatly accelerated by the war, are bringing about what we may well call a second Industrial Revolution, with new possibilities, not only of economic liberty and material well-being, but also of tyranny and injustice. We can trace back many of the difficulties in the relations of the Church and the worker to-day to the apathy of the churches towards the profound changes in society which that earlier Industrial Revolution was effecting, and to the questions of justice and freedom which were involved. To-day the works chaplain is in closer touch with working men than any other minister; he is in a key position to bridge the gap between the Church and the worker. If he sees his job in terms of evangelism and pastoral work alone, and is unaware of the Christian's concern with the issues of freedom and justice which are involved in the organization and development of contemporary industry, not only will he be throwing away the opportunity which is now opening before us, he will also confirm the worker in his still lurking suspicion that the Church is opposed to his real interests.

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